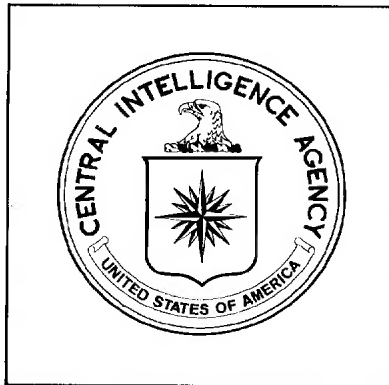


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STAFF NOTES:

HR

Soviet Union Eastern Europe

State Department review completed

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SOVIET UNION - EASTERN EUROPE

This publication is prepared for regional specialists in the Washington community by the USSR - Eastern Europe Division, Office of Current Intelligence, with occasional contributions from other offices within the Directorate of Intelligence. Comments and queries are welcome. They should be directed to the authors of the individual articles.

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Soviets Reaffirm Support for Laotian Coalition

The Soviet Union has reaffirmed its support for the Laotian coalition government despite the recent communist victories in Cambodia and Vietnam. The Soviets have not yet reacted to the Boun Om killing.

Moscow may be sending Hanoi a message that it does not want a military solution in Laos, while indicating to a broader audience that it will not be responsible if such a solution comes in the future.

On Monday, Soviet President Podgorny greeted a Laotian delegation headed by Sisoumang Sisaleumsak, a right-leaning neutralist who is deputy chairman of the National Political Coalition Council. Podgorny expressed confidence that strong Soviet-Lao ties are in the best interests of all peoples of Southeast Asia.

The Podgorny meeting seems to be part of a general Soviet effort to project the idea that Moscow neither anticipates nor wants a resumption of the Laotian war. In Vientiane, Soviet Ambassador Vdovine told the US envoy yesterday that the recent fighting near Sala Phou Koun did not signify any significant impending change in the Laotian situation and reiterated Moscow's support for the coalition.

The Soviet media, meanwhile, continue to praise the coalition's progress toward reconciling the opposing forces. The successes and achievements of the coalition have been highlighted, while pessimistic assessments of the coalition's viability in the light of events elsewhere in Indochina have been dismissed as the work of rightists who want the Laotian political arrangement to fail.

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A Husak Presidency in Czechoslovakia?

A Yugoslav correspondent in Prague reported on April 6 that party chief Husak will soon assume the additional post of Czechoslovakia's presidency from Ludvik Svoboda, the ailing incumbent. The journalist said that the move, which would further consolidate Husak's personal power, is expected to be made immediately after the country celebrates the 30th anniversary of liberation on Friday.

Combining the top party and state posts under Husak would be the most likely solution to the problem of replacing the 79-year-old Svoboda, who has been unable to fulfill his presidential duties for more than a year.

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There has been a general feeling that the changeover would take place only after Svoboda dies, but the 30th anniversary celebrations offer an excellent pretext for the shift. Although General Svoboda played an important role in liberating Czechoslovakia during World War II, his illness will probably preclude his attendance at the celebrations this week. In his absence, Husak could well mark the end of an era by assuming the presidency.

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Tito's Health

President Tito's absence from public view on May Day is sparking rumors that his health is deteriorating.

According to official announcements, Tito has been troubled by "sciatica" on several occasions this year. Some rumors now suggest that his problem is actually a gradual worsening of arteriosclerosis.

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Anxiety about Tito's well-being increases each year around his birthday on May 25.

The accuracy of the rumors will be tested this Friday at the V-E Day celebrations in Belgrade. Tito will make every effort to greet the throngs of ex-partisans expected in the capital. He may well have sat out May Day in order to save his energy for a display of vigor on Friday.

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CHRONOLOGY

April 29 Tass announces that several leading Soviet officials will visit Communist states in early May for V-E Day observances; First Deputy Premier Mazurov will go to Yugoslavia, party secretary Kirilenko to Czechoslovakia, party secretary Kulakov to East Germany, and party secretary Ustinov to Mongolia.

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Agriculture Minister Polyansky concludes an official visit to Yugoslavia.

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Radio Moscow, in a rare report on the activities of the Soviet border negotiators in Peking, announces that Deputy Foreign Minister Ilichev "has made a tour of a number of cities in South China."

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Yugoslav party secretary Dolanc and Premier Bijedic confer separately with visiting Romanian Foreign Minister Macovescu.

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Egyptian President Sadat sends a message to Moscow in response to one received from Brezhnev four days ago; the contents of the messages are not divulged.

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GDR-FRG transit negotiations regarding access to West Berlin resume in East Berlin.

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April 30 Politburo candidate-member Ponomarev ends a three-day stay in Paris, where

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he attended the funeral of prominent French Communist Jacques Duclos. []

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Romanian President Ceausescu chairs a meeting of the party's executive committee; it issues a statement on the Indochina and Middle East situations. []

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Foreign Minister Gromyko confers for the second day in a row with visiting fedayeen leader Arafat. []

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Danish Foreign Minister Andersen concludes a four-day, official visit to Hungary. []

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Egyptian Foreign Minister Fahmi sends a message to Foreign Minister Gromyko via Soviet charge Akopov regarding the "latest developments in the Middle East situation." []

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Radio Moscow announces that the first Soviet plane has landed at Hanoi with Soviet medicine and food for "trade unions of the republic of South Vietnam." []

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David Rockefeller completes a two-day visit to Bulgaria; he was received by party chief Zhivkov. []

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Romanian Foreign Minister Macovescu concludes a three-day, official visit to Yugoslavia. []

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May 1

Communist states celebrate May Day; Brezhnev receives the lion's share of the publicity in Moscow, where, for the

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second consecutive year, a statement
is read on behalf of the leadership.

Brezhnev and fedayeen leader Arafat
meet briefly at the end of the parade
in Moscow, but Soviet media do not
report the event.

Brezhnev sends a congratulatory mes-
sage to North Vietnamese party leader
Le Duan, referring to the installation
of a new "administration" in Saigon
without citing the Provisional Revolu-
tionary Government by name.

East Germany is the only Warsaw Pact
member-state to hold a military parade
on May Day.

Soviet leadership cables congratula-
tions to leaders of the Provisional
Revolutionary Government in South
Vietnam; the pledge of support, however,
is to "South Vietnamese patriots"
rather than to the PRGSVN.

May 2

Egypt permits *Long Live the Delegation*,
a play reportedly regarded by Soviet
officials as offensive to the USSR, to
open in Cairo.

[REDACTED]

May 3

Azerbaijani SSR party chief Aliyev
confers with visiting fedayeen leader
Arafat at Baku.

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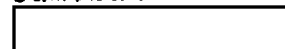
Seven Soviet citizens are among those who exit Cambodia by truck convoy.

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Western newsmen receive copies of the latest edition--issue #35--of the samizdat "Chronicle of Current Events."

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May 4

Visiting fedayeen leader Arafat returns to Moscow and is feted at a luncheon hosted by Foreign Minister Gromyko; Arafat holds a press conference for Soviet media representatives.

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Hungarian Foreign Ministry Puja concludes a four-day visit to Egypt.

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North Vietnamese Deputy Defense Minister Hoang Van Thai begins an official visit to the USSR.

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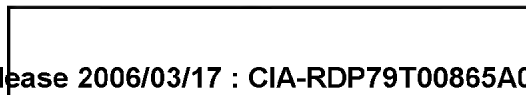
Egyptian Industry Minister Shahin begins an official visit to the USSR.

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Easter Sunday is observed by thousands in Russian Orthodox churches, but the USSR stirs resentment by making this date a working day to make up for May Day and other, official holidays.

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[REDACTED]

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May 5

Deputy Foreign Minister Ilichev returns to Moscow from the Sino-Soviet border negotiations in Peking. [REDACTED]

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Two Soviet ships dock at Da Nang, bringing cargos of fuel and foodstuffs. [REDACTED]

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Fedayeen leader Arafat concludes his one-week visit to the USSR and flies to Czechoslovakia, where he meets with party chief Husak and Foreign Minister Chnoupek. [REDACTED]

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Romanian Foreign Minister Macovescu begins a four-day, official visit to Finland. [REDACTED]

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May 6

US delegation led by W. Averell Harriman begins a four-day, official visit to the USSR to mark the 30th anniversary of V-E Day. [REDACTED]

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Politburo member Kirilenko begins a visit to Czechoslovakia in connection with the anniversary of V-E Day. [REDACTED]

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FUTURE EVENTS

May 8

[REDACTED]

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Austrian Chancellor Kreisky to begin a three-day, official visit to Romania. [REDACTED]

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SALT to begin a three-week recess.

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May 8 and 9

USSR and its allies to hold their principal observances of the 30th anniversary of V-E Day. [REDACTED]

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May 11

Hungarian Deputy Foreign Minister Nagy to leave Budapest for a five-day, official visit to Iceland. [REDACTED]

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Austrian Chancellor Kreisky to commence a three-day, official visit to Bulgaria. [REDACTED]

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May 12

Yugoslav-US economic council to convene at Dubrovnik. [REDACTED]

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Premier Kosygin reportedly to begin an official visit to Libya, the first such visit by a Soviet leader. [REDACTED]

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US naval vessels to commence a six-day, official port call at Leningrad; Soviet naval vessels to begin a six-day, official port call at Boston.

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[REDACTED]
Polish Central Committee to convene to discuss and approve party chief Gierek's proposals to reorganize the party-government bureaucracies in a manner that will tighten central controls at the expense of regional administrations. [REDACTED]

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May 14

Warsaw Pact member-states to observe the 20th anniversary of the formation of their organization. [REDACTED]

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Former West German chancellor Brandt to begin a one-week visit to the USSR for talks with Soviet leaders.

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May

West German Economics Minister Friderichs to make an official visit to Bulgaria.

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Polish Premier Jaroszewicz to make an official visit to Italy.

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French Foreign Minister Sauvagnargues to make an official visit to Yugoslavia.

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mid-May

East-West force reductions negotiations to resume at Vienna.

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May 16

Egyptian President Sadat to begin a state visit to Yugoslavia.

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May 17

Austrian Chancellor Kreisky to begin a four-day, official visit to Romania.

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May 18

US delegation of governors to commence a twelve-day, official visit to the USSR.

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May 20

Soviet-Romanian economic commission to convene in Moscow.

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Austrian President Kirchschrager to begin a five-day, state visit to Poland.

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May 21

Hungarian Foreign Minister Puja to begin a three-day, official visit to West Germany.

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late May Dutch Queen Juliana, accompanied by
her husband, to make a state visit
to Romania. [REDACTED]

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June 1 Soviet-Libyan economic commission to
convene in Moscow. [REDACTED]

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June 2 Polish party chief Gierek to begin
a four-day, official visit to Sweden.

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June 4 Romanian President Ceausescu to begin
a three-day, state visit to Brazil.

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[REDACTED]
David Rockefeller to commence three
days of official business in Czecho-
slovakia. [REDACTED]

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